

Reincarnation (*Tanāsukh*) According to Islam: Comparative, Historical and Contemporary Analyses*

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ABSTRACT

This study has three parts. In the first part I am going to make a comparison between belief in the Hereafter in Islam and belief in reincarnation in Indian religions in terms of their respective views of about God and the universe. In the second part, I am going to discuss the group associated with belief in the migration of the soul (*tanāsukh*) and the reaction they received from Muslim thinkers through Islamic history. In the third part, I am going to deal with the idea of reincarnation as the modern version of the idea of the migration of the soul. In this context, I am going to discuss various claims of groups or organizations defending the idea of reincarnation. Among these claims, one may include the following: reincarnation is scientifically verified, belief in reincarnation solves the problem of evil, and reincarnation is supported by sacred books including the Qurʾān. My overall purpose is to show that the religion and thought systems reveal their doctrines of immortality within the integral framework of their ontology, epistemology and universe models. In this regard, I will conclude by noting that the belief in reincarnation is not only compatible with the Islam's belief in hereafter but also Islamic teachings concerning God, the universe, and man.

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İslam Dini Açısından Reenkarnasyon (Tenâsüh): Tarihi ve Günümüz Açısından Bir Karşılaştırma

ÖZ

Üç bölümden oluşan bu çalışmanın birinci bölümünde İslam dini ile Hint kıtası dinleri arasında Tanrı, evren, insan tasavvurları ve ölümsüzlük doktrinleri ekseninde genel bir karşılaştırma yapılacaktır, böylelikle tenâsüh ve âhiret inancının ait olduğu dinî gelenek içindeki yeri gösterilmeye çalışılacaktır. İkinci bölümde İslam düşünce tarihinde tenâsüh inancıyla ilişkilendirilen gruplar ve bunlara gösterilen tepkiler ortaya koyulacaktır. Üçüncü bölümde ise kadîm tenâsüh inancının günümüzdeki şekli olan reenkarnasyon düşüncesi ele alınacaktır; bu bağlamda ülkemizde çeşitli dernek ve vakıflar vasıtasıyla faaliyetlerini yürüten ruhçu akımların, reenkarnasyonun bilimsel olarak kanıtlandığı, kötülük problemine çözüm getirdiği ve başta Kur’ân olmak üzere ilâhî dinlerin kutsal kitaplarının da bu inancı desteklediği gibi iddiaları değerlendirilecektir. Makalenin genel amacı ise din ve düşünce sistemlerinin ölümsüzlük doktrinlerini varlık anlayışları, dünya görüşleri ve bilgi nazariyeleriyle bütünleşik bir sistem dâhilinde ortaya koydukları, bu doğrultuda reenkarnasyon inancının da İslam dininin en temelde Tanrı, evren ve insan tasavvuruyla uyummadığını ortaya koymaktır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELE

Kelâm, İslam, Hint Dinleri, Tenâsüh, Reenkarnasyon, Âhiret İnancı, Ölümsüzlük, Kurtuluş

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘*tanāsukh*’, derived from the Arabic word ‘*naskh*’, which literally means, “replacing something with another thing by repudiating it” and “transferring it from a place to another”, can be defined as the rebirth of a living being in a different body after its death to complete the evolution of its soul.¹ In Western languages e.g., French and English, the idea of rebirth in a different body is commonly referred to with the term ‘reincarnation’, ‘metempsychosis’ and even ‘transmigration’.²

Before discussing *tanāsukh* or reincarnation, it is important to determine the scope of our current study. There’s an admitted difficulty involved in studies about death and the beyond. Even though death is an observable fact, it is directly out of the scope of human experience in the sense that a human being lives life only once and when s/he experiences death, s/he cannot have the opportunity to describe what it was

¹ Ibn Manzūr, “*naskh*”, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, n.d.), 4407; Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Istilāḥāt al-Funūn* (Lebanon: Maktabatu Lubnan, 1996), 2: 511-512; al-Sayyid al-Sharīf Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta’rifāt* (Beirut: Maktaba Lebanon, 1985), 72; Edward William Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1968), 8: 2788-2789.

² Ali İhsan Yitik, “Tenâsüh=Tanāsukh”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Publications 2011), 40: 441-443.

like. In that sense, death is the termination of every experience. So rationally or empirically proving whether human immortality will be achieved via bodily resurrection or reincarnation of the soul seems as impossible as proving that such a thing will never happen from a materialistic point of view.³

In the Islamic tradition, issues involving the afterlife are known as *ākhirah* (hereafter) or *ma'ād* (the returning); theologically, they are dealt with as a part of *fides ex auditu* topics (*sam'iyyat*).⁴ Such issues are about death and the beyond are called “*sam'iyyat*” to emphasize that knowledge of them is principally based on “reliable reports” (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*) acquired solely through hearing, rather than intellect or experience.⁵ That is to say, while rational knowledge gained by reasoning and inference is commonly used in issues about divinity, such as God's existence and His attributes, issues about the afterlife are mostly explained by proofs coming from revelation (the *Qur'ān*) and reports from the Prophet Muhammad (*ḥadith*). Because it is based on proofs coming from transmitted reports discussions about the afterlife had an special place in the *kalām* books of the classical period.⁶ Along with godhood and prophethood, Islamic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) regarded belief in the afterlife as one of the three important principles of religion (*al-uṣūl al-thalāthah*) and strove to understand *Qur'ānic* verses and *ḥadiths* about the issue in order to form a properly Islamic account of the afterlife. Islamic theologians sought to make belief in the afterlife coherent and consistent with this belief in the oneness of God principle (*tawḥīd*), as well as *Qur'ānic* notions such as isthmus (*barzakh*), judgment day, bodily resurrection, gathering of humans (*hashr*), reckoning, intercession, heaven and hell.⁷ As regards the doctrine of *tanāsukh*, Islamic theologians rejected it in all its aspects on grounds of it being incompatible with the essentials of the Islamic religion, especially the *Qur'ān*, *sunnah* and *ijmā'* (consensus). As a result, anyone that endorsed *tanāsukh* was deemed an infidel.

Today, on the other hand, the doctrine of reincarnation is supported by various spiritualist trends and is claimed as being different from the classical *tanāsukh* view. This new account, which is supported by various association and foundations, sees rebirth as being more about a consistently progressing spiritual evolution rather than as a form of punishment and reward. People who support the idea of reincarnation don't see it as a belief but more of a super-religious and super-national worldwide reality that has scientific status.

But before addressing this popular view of reincarnation, it will be beneficial to make a general comparison between, on the one hand, religions that adopted belief in the afterlife, and, on the other, Indian

³ Faruk Karaca, *Ölüm Psikolojisi=Psychology of Death* (Istanbul: Beyan Publications, 2000), 29; Hayati Hökelekli, “Ölüm ve Ölüm Ötesi Psikolojisi=Psychology of Death and After Death”, *UÜİFD* 3/3 (1991): 152.

⁴ Bekir Topaloğlu, *Kelām Araştırmaları Üzerine Düşünceler= Thoughts on the Kalām Researches* (Istanbul: İFAV, 2004), 38; Özervarlı, *Kelāmda Yenilik Arayışları*, 116.

⁵ Mehmet Bulğen, *Reenkarnasyonla İlişkilendirilen Ayetlerin Değerlendirilmesi=Evaluation of the Qur'ānic Verses Linked to the Reicarnation* (Master's thesis, Marmara University, 2005), 10.

⁶ M. Sait Özervarlı, *Kelāmda Yenilik Arayışları=Searching for Innovation in Kalām* (Istanbul: TDV Publications, 1998), 116.

⁷ For al-Ghazālī's criticism of philosophers who deny the bodily resurrection that will take place in the hereafter, see his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 20th chapter, edited by Sulaymān Dunya (Cairo: Dar al-Maārif, n.d.), 282 ff.

religions in which reincarnation is a common feature. The comparison will be made in terms of ideas involving God, the universe, and human knowledge since these latter determine the content of the former.⁸ The comparison that we are going to make will hopefully contribute to an understanding of what mainly causes the difference between the accounts of immortality and salvation in these two religious systems.

1. The Comparison between Reincarnation Belief of Indian Religions and Hereafter Belief of Islam in Terms of God, the Universe, and Human Concepts

The desire for immortality or the maintenance of one's existence after death is one of the essential qualities of human beings.⁹ No evidence that is opposed to immortality has dissuaded the human hope for eternal life, and so humans have accordingly sought out solutions for the predicament of disappearance in religious and philosophical terms.¹⁰ While many different solutions to this problem have been proposed throughout the history of thought,¹¹ the two main ones have been either a belief in a resurrection in an afterlife, and reincarnation in this world. The former is supported by monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and is dependent on the idea of a personal God; the latter is supported by Indian subcontinent religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and is dependent on the idea of the spirit's immortality.¹²

Contrary to popular belief, the belief of *tanāsukh* does not seem to go back to a long way in the history of human thought. While the oldest writings that imply soul's resurrection in different bodies until it

⁸ Many chapters (*sūrah*) in the Qur'an collocate the verses describing the universe, the creation of man and the administration of the universe, and verses depicting the life of the Hereafter. See *Sūrah al-Mulk* (67), *al-Insan* (76), *al-Mursalāt* (77), *an-Naba* (78), *an-Nāzi'at* (79), *at-Tāriq* (86), *al-A'lā* (87). See Bekir Topaloğlu, “*Āhiret*”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Publications 1998), 1: 544.

⁹ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1994), 55.

¹⁰ For different immortality solutions and their criticisms, see C. J. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of The Belief In A Life After Death* (USA: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1961), 28 ff; Antony Flew, “Immortality”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (USA: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972), 4:139-150; Karaca, *Ölüm Psikolojisi=Psychology of Death*, 17; John Leslie, *Immortality Defended* (Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 56 ff; H. Mellone, “Immortality” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980), VII: 172-179.

¹¹ Harold Coward, *Life after Death in World Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 2-9.

¹² The belief reincarnation was also embraced by some philosophers such as Pythagoras (570-500 BC), Plato (428-348 BC), Plotinus (205-270 AD), and some gnostic movements such as Spiritualism, Neo-spiritualism, and Theosophy. See Bruce Long, “Reincarnation”, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones (USA: Thomson & Gale, 2005), XI: 7676-7681; N.W. Thomas, “Transmigration”, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T. Clark Ltd, 1980), XII: 424; Stuart C. Brown, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction with Readings* (London: Routledge, 2001), 5-52; Turan Koç, *Ölümsüzlük Düşüncesi= The Notion of Immortality* (Istanbul: İz Publication, 2005), 135; Libby Ahluwalia, *Understanding Philosophy of Religion* (United Kingdom: Folens Limited, 2008), 235; Metin Yasa, *Felsefî ve Deneysel Dayanaklarla Ölüm Sonrası Yaşam= The Life After Death with Philosophical and Experimental Basis* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Publications, 2001), 23; Mehmet Aydın, *Din Felsefesi=Philosophy of Religion* (İzmir: İİFVY, 2001), 252, 264; Ninian Smart, “Reincarnation”, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (USA: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972), VII: 122-124.

reaches perfection are holy Indian texts like the Upanishads (800-400 BC), there is no such belief in texts that predate these like the Vedas (1300-800 BC).¹³ Reincarnation as a view of the afterlife seems to have originated after 500 BC in Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt.¹⁴ In earlier texts, like the *Book of the Dead*, an Egyptian book written around 3000 BC, the condition of soul in material world are described instead of the idea about reincarnation in a different body in this world.¹⁵

While the belief of transmigration of soul was present in various societies from Ancient Greece to Ancient Egypt, it did not have a single determinant form in those contexts.¹⁶ There are many separate beliefs in societies due to their structures, and beliefs that cannot include communities along with a support of a strong thought system do not have a determinant position in culture. There are six requirements that should all be met together for transmigration to have a distinct place as in the Indian subcontinent:

1. The understanding of a non-personal, absolute God;
2. Monism, in which God and the universe is accepted as one;
3. An epistemology that views the physical universe as imaginary or as a deception;
4. A dualist anthropology that views human beings as composed of a mortal body and an immortal soul;
5. A *karma* (moral law) that works independent of God and determines the soul's cycles of births and rebirths;
6. A caste system that is based on social stratification.¹⁷

The first contrast between Indian religions and divine religions is in their basic understanding of God. In Indian cosmology, God is not a personal being that exists beyond the universe. The universe as a whole is seen as God's embodied form or manifestation; He presents His existence in everything and in the whole

¹³ R. Garbe, "Transmigration (Indian)", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980) XII, 434; Wendy Doniger, *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (California: University of California Press, 1980), 3.

¹⁴ Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction* (USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 172; Long, "Reincarnation", 7677.

¹⁵ Mark Albrecht, *Reincarnation: A Christian Critique of a New Age Doctrine* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1982), 8-9, 26-35; Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York: Banned & Noble Inc., 1971), 1: IV; Axel Michaels, *Hinduism, Past and Present*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 156; Ernest Valea, "Reincarnation: Its Meaning and Consequences", access: 6 February 2011, <http://www.comparativereligion.com/reincarnation.html>; W. M. Flinders Petrie, "Transmigration (Egyptian)", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980), XII: 431-432.

¹⁶ Although the belief in reincarnation were defended by some philosophers such as Pythagoras (570-500 BC) and Plato (428-348 BC) in ancient Greece, it could not turn into mass belief in this society. Reincarnation was not a dominant belief in Egypt either. See R. Garbe, "Transmigration (Greek and Roman)", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980), 12: 431-432; W. M. Flinders Petrie, "Transmigration (Egyptian)", XII: 431.

¹⁷ Joseph Prabhu, "Upanishadic Philosophy", *Encyclopedia of India*, edited by Stanley Wolpert (USA: Thomson Gale 2006), 198-200.

universe.¹⁸ Now because in such a view of God is not an agent that voluntarily interferes in the universe, being an absolute being and without personality, this leads naturally to an account of the afterlife in terms of an immortal spirit or soul. And so claims such as the soul is an immaterial substance that and it can maintain its life by itself after the death of physical body are accepted as postulates.¹⁹

As for theistic religions, one of which is Islam, immortality is viewed in light of a personal divinity. According to this approach, it is not anything about the soul's essence that will make the human being immortal; rather, it is the promise of God, who has wisdom, will and capability, for recreation that will guarantee it.²⁰ A person who believes in Allah as the creator of the universe will also believe that He can recreate it as He wills.²¹ For this reason, methods for proving the immortality with reference to soul's essence were not greatly favored among religious communities in Islam.²² In Islamic theology, as can be seen in their discussions of issues falling under 'sam'ıyyāt', the theologians spent little time basing their belief in immortality on rational arguments but more on the idea of God's fulfilling a promise, contained in scripture, of bringing about the resurrection of human beings.²³

The different approaches of these two religious systems to immortality that derive from their concepts of God can also be seen in their salvation theories. In Indian religions, salvation is determined by one's *karma*, the universal causal law that works independent of God.²⁴ It is human's own efforts dependent on this law that will bring salvation, not his/her faith in God.²⁵ Neither the idea of sacrifice, which is performed to save people, nor the chute, which follows the redemption, has a place in Hinduism. A human only saves or loses himself.²⁶ In Islam, salvation is only possible by gaining Allah's consent or favor,²⁷ and Allah's favor

¹⁸ Paul A. Harrison, *Elements of Pantheism* (USA: Llumina Press, 2004), 13; A.S. Geden, “Pantheism (Hindu)”, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980), 18: 617-620.

¹⁹ Koç, *Ölümsüzlük Düşüncesi= The Notion of Immortality*, 46.

²⁰ al-Anbiyā 21/104.

²¹ Yāsīn 36/77-81; Kāf 50/15; also see İlyas Çelebi, *İslām İnancında Gayp Problemi= The Problem of Invisibility (Ghayb) in Islamic Belief* (Istanbul: İFAV, 1996), preface.

²² Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm=Annotated Science of Kalâm* (Istanbul: Fatih-Enes Kitabevi 2000), 412.

²³ The attempt to explain the concept of "immortality" in the Islamic world with the concepts of philosophy has become widespread in the post-Ghazālī period (d. 505/1111). For this discussion, see: Bulğen, *Reenkarnasyonla İlişkilendirilen Ayetlerin Değerlendirilmesi= Evaluation of the Qur'ānic Verses Linked to the Reicarnation*, 96-98.

²⁴ Michael Witzel, “Hinduism (Dharma)”, *Encyclopedia of India*, edited by Stanley Wolpert (USA: Thomson Gale, 2006), II: 190.

²⁵ Ahluwalia, *Understanding Philosophy of Religion*, 253.

²⁶ Mehmet Taplamacıoğlu, *Karşılaştırmalı Dinler Tarihi= Comparative History of Religions* (Ankara: Güneş Matbaacılık 1966), 145, 146.

²⁷ al-Fajr 89/28; Āl-i 'Imrān 3/15, 162; at-Tawbah 9/72; al-Bayyina 98/8.

can be gained by believing in Him and performing good deeds.²⁸ Without God’s help, guidance, and especially without faith in Him, salvation is impossible.²⁹

In Indian religions, on one hand, soul gets purified with rebirths; on the other hand, it rises by broadening its knowledge and experience. This rise of individual soul (*Atma*) continues until the soul escapes from the cycle of rebirths (*Samsara*) by attaining salvation (*Nirvana*) which is supposed to be a state of union with ultimate reality or *Brahma*.³⁰ And hence it seems that while Indian spiritual thought accepts the post-eternality of individual souls, it does not accept their pre-eternality.³¹ In the religion of Islam, salvation is understood as *lika’ Allah* i.e., meeting or congregation with Allah. But this state, which will take place in the afterlife, does not mean an ontological union with God or the disappearance of one’s personality in His essence. It is not possible for beliefs which threaten a person’s individual existence in terms of some future union or extinction in the divine, a union between creature and Creator, to be consistent with Islam’s monotheistic account of God its understanding of the relation of human beings to that God.

In the Indian religious tradition, ‘the self is an entity that has qualities, such as memory, identity and consciousness.’³² These qualities, though they maintain its personal identity during its temporal existence, are not permanent in that with the death of the body, they all cease to be. What remains and is transferred to afterlife is *Atma*, the individual soul, which is loaded with karmic destiny.³³ In the Islamic tradition, on the other hand, there’s the promise of resurrection, an event in which a persona’s ultimate accountability will be determined. This is because Islam sees a human being’s life experience for which s/he is responsible as an integral part of him/her. Therefore, when a person is resurrected in afterlife, s/he will be conscious of his/her identity and the things s/he did on Earth as an individual.³⁴

In Indian cosmology, human does not have a special place in the universe; s/he is somewhere in the middle in the category of existence. This is because of the belief that soul is essential and body is instrumental. All living beings are said to have the same soul, which is why the soul in the human body can reincarnate as a form of animal or plant later. From this point of view, all beings are relatives because they have the same life.³⁵ According to the religion of Islam, the human being is not an ordinary being, but s/he is the noblest of creation (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*). Everything on Earth is put into the service and disposal of human beings as they are the representatives (*khalif*) of God. Even the angels are ordained to prostrate before

²⁸ al-Rad 13/22-24; al-Kahf 18/28; Tāhā 20/130; al-Rūm 38/38.

²⁹ al-Māida 5/5; al-A’rāf 7/147; al-Kahf 18/103-105.

³⁰ Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2009), 25; T. Patrick Burke, *The Major Religions: An Introduction with Text* (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 24.

³¹ Frank Jevons, *Comparative Religion* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 76.

³² Charles Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 181.

³³ Warren Matthews, *World Religions* (USA: Cengage Learning, 2008), 74.

³⁴ Aydın, *Din Felsefesi=Philosophy of Religion*, 261; Hökelekli, “Ölüm ve Ölüm Ötesi Psikolojisi=Psychology of Death and After Death”, 164; Koç, *Ölümsüzlük Düşüncesi=The Notion of Immortality*, 135; Yasa, *Felsefi ve Deneysel Dayanaklarla Ölüm Sonrası Yaşam=The Life After Death with Philosophical and Experimental Basis*, 12

³⁵ Kürşat Demirci, “Tanāsukh”, *İslām’da İnanç İbadet ve Günlük Yaşayış Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İFAV, 1997), 4: 333.

them.³⁶ All of these characteristics are due to a special duty and responsibility that is given to human beings by Allah.³⁷

In Indian cosmology, accepting God and the universe as one (monism/pantheism) and thus regarding the physical universe's existence as an unfortunate event, a lower form of life, and seeking salvation by reuniting with the Absolute, have caused people to have a pessimistic perspective with regard to physical world. Thus, the life that is lived with the external senses is seen as a source of evil and an unwanted condition, which separates humans from the union with the 'Absolute'.³⁸ The religion of Islam, however, is optimistic about material life, insofar as in the *Qur'ān*, it draws a picture of the physical universe, which is in harmony and filled with beauties that show the perfection of its Creator.³⁹ Human beings are expected to maintain the harmony in nature, improving the Earth and making use of earth's rightful blessings.⁴⁰ Therefore, gnostic approaches, such as cutting oneself off from the world and worldly things, inaction, refusing the reality of physical universe and discrediting degrading what is material are not compatible with the religion of Islam. The *Qur'ān* does not accept a dualist human theory according to which the soul is a human being's true reality and the physical body as unimportant, is a kind of temporary prison, and reports that Satan was dismissed from Allah's presence because of he disdained the fact that the human was made of clay.⁴¹ According to the *Qur'ān*, it is humans themselves, who are born, live, die, and will be judged by being resurrected and then will go to heaven or hell, in a harmony of soul and body.⁴² Therefore, the dualist human understanding that sees human's soul as his immortal essence and body as his unimportant mortal vehicle or prison is not consistent with the *Qur'ānic* view of human beings, which sees them as body-soul unities and responsible in a holistic way.⁴³

³⁶ al-Baqara 2/29-34; at-Tīn 95/4.

³⁷ Hûd 11/7; al-Mulk 67/2; al-Insân 76/2.

³⁸ Ismail Raji al-Faruqî, *al-Tawhîd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992), 31 ff.

³⁹ Kâf 50/6-11.

⁴⁰ Hûd 11/61; al-Baqara 2/168,172; al-Ankabût 29/17; al-Cum'a 62/10.

⁴¹ al-A'râf 7/12; Sâd 38/76, The *Qur'an* also maintains that the creation of man from the earth as the evidence of God's existence and power (ar-Rûm 30/20).

⁴² al-Baqara 2/72,233,286; an-Nisâ 4/1, 29,83; al-Mâide 5/32; al-An'am 6/151,152; al-A'râf 7/43; al-Isrâ 17/33; al-Kahf 18/74; Taha 20/40; al-Kasas 28/18; at-Talâk 65/7; ash-Shams 91/7-8, Âl Imrân 3/163; at-Tawbah 9/128; ar-Rûm 30/21, al-Anbiyâ 21/35, Lokmân 31/28, al-Fajr 39/27-30.

⁴³ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an: Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 17; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (New York: Routledge 2008), 125-130; M. Saim Yeprem, “Ruh=Soul”, *Ansiklopedik İslâm Lügati* (Istanbul: Tercüman Gazetesi Publications, 1983), II: 579; Mehmet Paçacı, *Kutsal Kitaplarda Ölüm Ötesi=After Death in the Divine Books* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Publications, 2001), 85; Mehmet Dalkılıç, *İslâm Mezheplerinde Ruh=The Soul in Islamic Sects* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004), 24; Aydın, *Din Felsefesi=Philosophy of Religion*, 241, 261; Erkan Yar, *Ruh-Beden İlişkisi Açısından İnsanın Bütünlüğü Sorunu= The Problem of Integrity vis-à-vis Soul-Body Relation* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Publications, 2000), 42.

In Indian cosmology, the belief that views God and nature as one and the physical universe as ultimately illusory, a mirror that inaccurately reflects God, leads either to the sanctification of nature, on the one hand, or to the denial of the visible physical world altogether, on the other.⁴⁴ Thus, a mysterious, incomprehensible, and frightening understanding of nature, which has divine qualities and does not have reality at the same time, naturally emerges. Also, the thought that the visible universe consists of only imagination and illusion affected epistemology negatively, and language, written revelation and tradition are regarded insufficient and relative and thus as obstacles to a human being's grasp of ultimate reality. The combination of ideas like that of an illusory world, and irrationalist epistemology, and the belief in 'rebirth of a dead person's soul in a different body in the world' – all of which may seem contrary to the common sense of a Muslim or Western audience –, come to have the status of unquestionable doctrines.

As for the religion of Islam, the separation of creator (Allah) and His creatures (*makhluqāt*) along definite lines, and the placement of the whole universe under the all-embracing control of a just God, who does not act arbitrarily, and the acceptance of the genuine reality of the physical universe, prevents nature from being understood in mythological terms and purges it of the random domination of gods. And this in turn becomes one of the most important factors in the development of natural science; for⁴⁵ it is not possible for science to work with an understanding of nature that is dominated by superstitions and magical features, a nature that is sacred,, incomprehensible, lacking any order or law..⁴⁶

Finally, in Indian cosmology, not only human beings and other living beings, but also the whole universe itself is subject to reincarnation. Accordingly, when a universe's life is over, the universe disentangles and then gets reborn (*kalpa*).⁴⁷ The universe's being good or bad in its former existence determines its state in its new life too. Thus, in Indian cosmology history consists of successive, cyclical periods, and these periods continue forever.⁴⁸ As for the religion of Islam, history is not cyclical, but is rather linear in nature, with a beginning and end. The universe is not eternal; it is created by Allah out of nothing. Only Allah is eternal and everlasting.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Holmes Rolston, *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* (USA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006), 259 ff; R. Luis, *Hinduism* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), 40-41; Geoff Teece, *Hinduism Religion in Focus* (USA: Black Rabbit Books, 2005), 10; also see: George Mason Williams, *Handbook of Hindu Mythology* (USA: ABC-CLIO inc., 2003), 16.

⁴⁵ Isma'il Faruqi, "Islam and the Theory of Nature", *Islamic Quarterly* 26/1 (1984): 16-24.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Brodd - Gregory L. Sobolewski, *World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery* (Canada: Saint Mary's Press 2009), 290.

⁴⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (USA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1987), 108.

⁴⁸ Ralph Mark Rosen, *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: UPenn Museum of Archaeology, 2004), 92 ff.

⁴⁹ al-Qasas 28/88; al-Ḥadid 57/3; al-Furqān 25/2.

The Table That Compares The Religion of Islam and Indian Subcontinent Religions	
The Religion of Islam	Religions in Indian Subcontinent
The universe is everything other than God. Being consists of God and the universe (dualism).	The universe is everything that exists. God and the universe are separate only in mind; in fact, they are one and the same (monism/pantheism).
The universe is profane.	Because the universe is God’s manifestation, it is essentially sacred. For this reason, it is possible for the beings in the universe to be sacralized. This results in Polytheism.
The universe comes to exist after not having existed by God’s willing to create it	God is absolute and His voluntary intervention in the universe is not possible. Existence is eternal and everlasting.
The universe is under the management of a just and magisterial God who is omniscient and omnipotent.	The universe is under the control of a cause-effect law (<i>karma</i>), which is constant and impersonal.
No being can change the laws of nature except God.	It is possible for semi-gods, guru (priests), and avatars to influence the laws of nature.
History is linear in nature.	History is cyclic because the whole universe including gods is subject to <i>karma</i> and <i>tanāsukh</i> . When a universe’s life is over, it disentangles and a new universe is born. The universe’s being good or bad in its former existence affects its condition in its new life on the basis of god Vishnu’s different avatars in different and consecutive periods.
Material’s reality is constant. Physical universe has a genuine reality.	Physical universe is not real; it consists of imagination and illusion.
Comprehending the universe is possible. Nature is open to human understanding by experimental and observational research.	Comprehending or understanding the universe is impossible because it is God’s manifestation. Essentially, it is sacred, great, superior, magical, mysterious and unfathomable.
Language, tradition, and revelation are the essential reference sources in reaching the truth.	Language, tradition, and written revelation are obstacles in knowing truth. Someone reaches the truth under the guidance of gurus and avatars with meditation (like the authors of all holy Vedas and Upanishads).
The universe is essentially good, and life in it is a blessing. Humans ought to be grateful to God because He brought them to existence in it	Physical universe is an unwanted condition, a decrease in the level from Absolute reality. Because it separates human from absolute reality, the life that is lived with senses is a tragedy. It is necessary for people

	to free themselves from samsara (death-birth cycle) and reach absolute reality to attain salvation.
A Newborn is innocent. Human will reap in the afterlife what they sow in this worldly life.	Every newborn comes to the world with a karmic destiny to be fulfilled depending upon their former lives. The law of karma is the link between a person's past and the future. Human happiness and pain in the earthly life are the result of his former life (since a human being will pass throughout five stages of life and rebirth like avatars).
Resurrection of human beings after death in the afterlife is possible by God's recreation.	After the death of the body, soul reincarnates in this world in a different body in accordance with its karma. There is no need for the intervention of God or gods' in this.
When resurrected in afterlife, a person's identity in terms of his memory and consciousness will be preserved exactly the same. A human being will remember the actions s/he performed during the earthly life.	Personal identity markers from a former life, like memory and consciousness, are completely erased in rebirth. It is not possible to remember former lives.
A human being is an inseparable whole with his soul and body.	Soul and body dualism is essential. What really matters is the soul, and physical body is a worthless prison.
Human is the noblest of all creatures (ashraf al-makhluqat).	A human being does not have a privileged place in the universe.
Human's salvation depends on the faith in Allah and His grace. If Allah wishes, He can forgive a person's sins.	It is human's own effort that brings salvation to him dependent on the karmic law, not God. Forgiveness, mercy, intercession or pity are irrelevant for in this matter.

After the above general comparison of the two religions, the question we must ask at this point is whether the belief of *tanāsukh* is consistent with the religion of Islam or not. Even though it is claimed that the transmigration of the soul can exist in divine religions with a syncretic approach, this does not seem quite possible considering the ontological, cosmological and epistemological differences that we have mentioned above. For the doctrine of *tanāsukh* is not just a simple belief about rebirth in this world, it also entails a certain ontology, cosmology, and epistemology which in turn require of view human being's in the world that seems incompatible with core doctrines of a monotheistic religion. Hence, it seems that the approval of this doctrine in the religion of Islam is impossible without damaging core Islamic principles such as the belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), the understanding of the universe, human's position and role in the universe, belief in afterlife, etc. Further, the consequences of these essential principles, such as the doctrine of salvation, individual responsibility, the individualization of crime, presumption of innocence, pardon, mercy, forgiveness, and many more essentials, will also need to be rethought.

The approval is also not possible given the exclusivist claims of monotheistic religions; for such claims obstruct syncretism of any kind.⁵⁰ Accordingly, there will be only one right religion to bring salvation to humanity,⁵¹ and all salvation theories of other religions, and those religions themselves, will be void.⁵² For example, the comments of Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī (973-1048 AD) on the belief of *tanāsukh* in Indian religions are such as to support this claim:

“Just as *shahada* [declaration of faith], the holy trinity and Saturday are important to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, respectively, *tanāsukh* is important to Hindus. For this reason, a Hindu who does not believe in *tanāsukh* is unimaginable. Anyway, Hindus do not accept someone as one of them, who does not think in this way.”⁵³

As is seen, if a principle of belief gives a religion its distinguishing feature and especially if it is an essential principle for salvation and a core part of the religion, then belief in it by members of other religions will more or less amount to ‘conversion’.⁵⁴ But conversion is a difficult matter; as Vinet (1797-1847) stated, “It is easier to build Rome in one day than converting someone to religion.”⁵⁵ Therefore, it is meaningless to expect from members of divine religions to adopt the ‘salvation with transmigration’ doctrine, which has become distinctive feature of Indian religions.

Furthermore, the mystical features of few groups that adopted *tanāsukh* among divine religions corroborate the thesis above. For such mystical schools do not feel obliged to be bound to “text’s” literal understanding.⁵⁶ Mystical groups⁵⁷ tend to, through esoteric interpretations of scripture, remove differences,

⁵⁰ Kürşat Demirci, *Yahudilik ve Dinî Çoğulculuk= Judaism and Religious Pluralism* (Istanbul: Ayışığı Kitapları, 2000), 13.

⁵¹ Āl-i ‘Imrān 3/85.

⁵² Mahmut Aydın, “Paradigmanın Yeni Adı: Dinsel Çoğulculuk= New Title of Paradigm: Religious Pluralism”, *Hristiyan, Yahudi ve Müslüman Perspektifinden Dinsel Çoğulculuk ve Mutlaklık İddiaları*, der. Mahmut Aydın (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Publications 2005), 26.

⁵³ Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, *Tahqīq mā li’l-Hind*, edited by A. Safā (Beirut: Ālam al-kutub 1983), 39; about the fact that Hinduism’s approach to the other is now an exclusionist, see Ali İhsan Yitik, “Hinduizm’in Diğer Dinlere Bakışı= Approach of Hinduism to Other Religions”, *Dinler Tarihi Araştırmaları - I* (Ankara: Dinler Tarihi Derneği, 1998), 145.

⁵⁴ Baki Adam, *Yahudilik ve Hristiyanlık Açısından Diğer Dinler= Other Religions from the Perspective of Christianity and Judaism* (Istanbul: Pınar Publications, 2002), 9.

⁵⁵ Alexander Vinet, *Outlines of Theology*, 84; quoted from James Strachan, “Conversion” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hasting (Edinburgh: T T Clark Ltd, 1980), VII: 109.

⁵⁶ Süleyman Uludağ, *İslām Düşüncesinin Yapısı= Structure of Islamic Thought* (Istanbul: Dergah Publications 1999), 129-136; common features of mysticism are: Mystery, negative attitude towards matter, journeying and initiation (sayr wa sulūk), successions, sources of information reached by internal enlightenment, attainment of absence, passivity, suffering. It should be noted that all these features are largely overlapping with the Indian world view that embraces reincarnation. see Mustafa Kara, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi= History of Sufism and Religious Orders* (Istanbul: Dergah Publications, 1999), 13-17.

⁵⁷ Muhammed Tanjī, *İslām Tasavvufu Üzerine= On the Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: Damla Yayınevi, 2002), 62-73.

contradictions and contrasts in all religions. As a result, there’s a strong tendency to pluralist view of salvation and a syncretic view of religion.⁵⁸ After overcoming the obstacle of exclusivism and removing differences of quality in religions, the notions and symbols that belong to ‘others’ become freely usable. This is also what pretty much happens in some groups such as Jewish kabbalah, Christian Catharsis and with groups that are associated with *tanāsukh* doctrine in Islamic world.

2. The Groups/Sects That Were Associated with the Belief of *Tanāsukh* in the History of Islamic Thought

Muslims, who participated in cultural exchanges with many cultures and appropriated certain of their elements have always approached with suspicion to the belief of transmigration of soul and refused to accept it. Especially in the development of Islamic thought, while Islam benefitted from many external factors, the belief of *tanāsukh* is hardly ever accepted, which should be an indication of its incompatibility with Islam. In fact, in the regions where circle Islamic influence spread, it caused the transmigrationalist and incarnationist beliefs to lose their effects to large extent.⁵⁹ Even so, however, there did remain certain marginal groups that were associated with beliefs such as *tanāsukh* and reincarnation throughout the Islamic history.

In the Islamic tradition, the origins of *tanāsukh* is controversial. Although there is not a clear information about pre-Islamic Arab’s afterlife beliefs, narratives like “when a person is killed a bird leaves his/her body and screams at the person’s grave once a century” are referred as manifestation of beliefs like transmigration of soul, weak as they may be.⁶⁰ Moreover, on the basis of the statements of polytheists, who rejected the afterlife belief, as cited in the *Qur’ān*,⁶¹ it can be argued that a negative perspective that excluded everything about afterlife was dominant and valid among pre-Islamic Arabians.⁶²

As to which cult had the greatest impact on the emergence of *tanāsukh* in the Islamic world, al-Shahrastānī (d. 548H/1158CE), who was a historian of sects, mentions a sophisticated interaction among various groups, such as Zoroastrian, Mazdakism, Indian Brahmanists, the Sabians of Iraq, and Greek Philosophers.⁶³ However, considering the regions where Muslims lived and their communication channels, it is possible to say that Indian influence outweighs.⁶⁴ In fact, it is known that Islamic philosophers subject to Aristotle (384-322 BC) in the matter of transmigration of souls, and they did not take this belief into their system.⁶⁵ In

⁵⁸ Demirci, *Yahudilik ve Dinî Çoğulculuk=Judaism and Religious Pluralism*, 14.

⁵⁹ İlhan Kutluer, “İslâmî Akıl Reenkarnasyona Geçit Vermez = Islamic Intellect does not let Reincarnation”, *İzlenim* (Eylül 1993), 9.

⁶⁰ Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*, trans. Mustafa Öz (Istanbul: Litera Publications, 2008), 437.

⁶¹ al-Isrā 17/49; al-Duhān 44/34,35,36; al-Ahkaf 46/17; al-Nahl 16/38; al-An’am 6/29; Tagābun 64/7.

⁶² Jawād ‘Ali, *Al-Mufasssal fî al-Tārîkh al-Arab qabl al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm, 1976), VI: 128-132.

⁶³ al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*, 160.

⁶⁴ Dalkılıç, *İslâm Mezheplerinde Ruh=The Soul in Islamic Sects*, 308.

⁶⁵ Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114-116; İrfân Abdulhamîd, *Dirāsât fî al-Firāq wa al-Aqāid al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut: 1984), 81-82; Hasan Özalp, “Aristoteles ve İbn

addition, it is true that concepts such as ‘immortal, absolute soul’, ‘dualism of soul and body’ and ‘God’s being Absolute’ that philosophers of Islam adopted from philosophers such as Plato (427-347 BC) and Plotinus (204-270 AD), who believed in *tanāsukh*, provided beliefs like transmigration an intellectual background and material ground.⁶⁶

In the Islamic world, incarnation and transmigration were supported by some sects such as Kadariyyah, Rafiziyyah, Ismā‘īliyyah, Yazidiyyah, Bektāshīyyah, Hurufism, Druze, and people, such as Abū Muslim al-Khurasani (d. 137H/755CE) and Abu Bakr al-Rāzi (d. 313H/925CE). However, when the work of people and groups, such as Jabir ibn Hayyān (d. 200H/815CE), Ikhwan al-Safā, Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638H/1240CE) and Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672H/1273CE), whose names are often mentioned in relation with *tanāsukh* and who have been considered to have tendency for this creed, are analyzed carefully it can be seen that these people do not truly endorse *tanāsukh*.⁶⁷

Historians of sects cites two group who accepted *tanāsukh* in the Islamic community: some Mu’tazilīs and Rāfizīs (Ghulat-ı Shi’a).

The Mu’tazile theologian Nazzām’s (d. 231H/845CE) students, such as Ahmed Ibn Hābit (d. 230H/845CE AD) and Ahmed b. Nānūs (between 227H/842CE and 232H/847CE) are associated with *tanāsukh*. For them, God tests those who obey or rebel against Him with distress, pain, abundance and tastes and sends them to earth in a different shape each time according to their conditions. At the end of this process, souls of good ones go to heaven at first and then pass to angels. The responsibility vanishes from the person who takes on the form of an animal because of doing so much evil. Their punishment is left to hell.⁶⁸

The beliefs like incarnation and transmigration are adopted by all sects of Ghulat-ı Shi’a (Rāfizīs). Sabaiyyah from Rāfizīs is the first sect in which the incarnation is seen as they claim that God’s spirit migrated into Ali. Ghulat sects such as Bayāniyyah, Hattābiyyah, Jahāniyyah and Rāwandīyyah consider imams as

Sinā’nın Reenkarnasyonu Reddi= Refutation of Reincarnation by Aristotle and Avicenna”, *Dinî Araştırmalar* 16/42 (2013): 78-100.

⁶⁶ Mehmet Bulğen, *Reenkarnasyonla İlişkilendirilen Ayetlerin Değerlendirilmesi=Evaluation of the Qur’ānic Verses Linked to the Reincarnation*, 69.

⁶⁷ İlhan Kutluer, “İslâmî Akıl Reenkarnasyona Geçit Vermez = Islamic Intellect does not let Reincarnation”, 9; Mustafa Aşkar, “Reenkarnasyon (Tanāsukh) Meselesi ve Mutasavvıfların Bu Konuya Bakışlarının Değerlendirilmesi= Evaluation of The Issue of Reincarnation and Outlooks of Mutasawwifūn on It”, *Tasavvuf* 3 (2000), 89; Eyüp Bekiryazıcı, “Bazı İslām Filozoflarının Tanāsukh Meselesine Yaklaşımları=Approaches of Some Islamic Philosophers to the Issue of Reincarnation”, *Marife*, 8/1 (2008), 05-219; Veysel Güllüce, “Mevlānā’ya İsnat Edilen Reenkarnasyon ve Evrim Görüşleri=Opinions of Reincarnation and Evolution Affiliated to Mawlānā”, *Uluslararası Mevlana ve Mevlevilik Sempozyumu Bildirileri-II* (Şanlıurfa 2007), 155-60.

⁶⁸ ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aşriyya, 1993), 275; Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*, edited by Muhammad Ibrahim Nasr and ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Umayrah (Riyadh: Sharikat Maktabat ‘Ukaz, 1982), 166-167; Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, 68.

manifestation of divine spirit. As for the belief of transmigration of souls, which means the reincarnation of souls in different bodies in the world, is most clearly seen in Tanāsukhiyyah.⁶⁹

In Nuşayriyyah and Ismā‘īliyyah, which is an esoteric thought, incarnation and *tanāsukh* coexist. While some of these claim *imām*’s godhood with a sort of incarnation method, some others have claimed that imams will return to earth after death. According to Nuşayrīs, if the sinners in their religions, they return to the earth as Jewish, Sunnī Muslim and Christian; but those who had never known Caliph ‘Alī and never believed in him return to the earth in animal bodies. Nuşayrī spirits, which complete the seven steps with *tanāsukh*, ascend to stars again that they actually descended from them previously. In Ismā‘īliyyah, faithless souls will travel between birth and death until they recognize the *imām* of that era, and they will escape from this misfortune only if they recognize the imam.⁷⁰

The *tanāsukh* belief in Yazidism, on the other hand, has developed mostly under the influence of Saibism. Yazidis believe that after death, a human’s soul migrates to other people if s/he is a good person, or it migrates to animals if s/he is a bad person. Hell is the torture that evil people suffer in animal bodies in the life on earth; souls ascend to sky by transforming into good people after they pay their penalties.⁷¹

Druzism is one of the sects that adopted the *tanāsukh* belief. According to them, dying is to reline (*taqammas*). Soul changes the body like taking off a shirt and wearing it again. When soul reaches perfection, it does not need to change the shirt again. From that point, it is now reunited with universal intellect.⁷²

Traces of *tanāsukh* belief are seen in Bektāshīyyah too. The statements in Bektāshī legends, such as a single soul’s appearance respectively in all prophets, starting from Adam and eventually to Prophet Muhammad, and ‘Alī’s returning to earth as Haji Baktash Walī and then as indwelling in the bodies of saints (*walī*) until the doomsday, all seem to be indicative of the idea of *tanāsukh* in Bektāshīyyah.⁷³

As for the mainstream Islamic scholars, especially the theologians, they rejected the *tanāsukh* doctrine in all its aspects, on grounds that it contradicted the belief of the afterlife (*akhirah*) that is based on the *Qur’ān*, together with the *sunnah* and *ijmā* (consensus), and accused its followers with disbelief. For instance, Abū al-Hasan al-Ash’ari (d. 324H/936CE), who is one of the great imams of the followers of *Ahlu’s-Sunnah*, asserts that the sects that adopted *tanāsukh*, which he named as ‘extremists (*ahl al-guluw*)’, claim that heaven and hell are in this world by saying that the universe is not temporal; thus, they deny doomsday and afterlife, and also these people assume alcohol, adultery and many more unlawful things, which the religion of Islam

⁶⁹ Abū l-Hasan al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aşriyyah, 1995), I: 36,42,45; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 133, 270-76; Shahrīstānī, *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*, 160, 178.

⁷⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergah Publications2004), I: 594; B. Carra De Vaux, “Tenāsüh=Tanāsukh”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: 1979), 12:158-159.

⁷¹ A. Bülent Baloğlu, *İslām’a Göre Tekrar Doğuş=Resurrection According to Islam* (Ankara: Kitabiyat Publications2001), 71-73; Veysel Güllüce, *Kur’ān Işığında Reenkarnasyon= Reincarnation in Consideration of the Qur’ān* (Istanbul: Rağbet Publications, 2004), 35.

⁷² İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, “Dürzi Mezhebi”, *DFİFD* 1-2-3 (Istanbul: 1926): 36-39.

⁷³ A. Yaşar Ocak, *Bektaşî Menakibnāmelerinde İslām Öncesi İnanç Motifleri= Pre-islamic Belief Patterns in Bektashi’s Manağibnāma* (Istanbul: 1983), 139.

forbids, as lawful.⁷⁴ In his work “*al-Fark Bayna'l-Firak*,” Abdulqadir al-Baghdādī (d. 429H/1037CE) when he seeks an answer for the question ‘Who are Islamic communities and who are not?’, he uses the belief of *tanāsukh* and *hulūl* (incarnation) as a measure. According to Baghdadi, sects that have the belief of transmigration of soul, such as Bāṭiniyyah, Bayāniyyah, Jahāniyyah, Sabaiyyah, are the so-called sects that claim to belong to Islam even though they do not. He maintained the funeral prayers and marriage ceremonies of these people cannot be validly performed, and that the animals they slaughter cannot be permissibly eaten.⁷⁵ Ibn Hazm (d. 456H/1064CE) says that there is a consensus that followers of *tanāsukh* become disbelievers. For him, the Islamic community agrees on the view that reward and punishment will actualize in heaven or hell when souls return to their bodies after the judgment day.⁷⁶ Al- Ghazālī (d. 505H/1111CE) rejects *tanāsukh* which is tantamount to reincarnation of the soul to the body in this world by stating that the return of souls to their bodies is only possible in afterlife.⁷⁷

Sufis’ opinions about this matter have a special importance, for they are often associated with transmigration. In his work *al-Luma’*, which is counted as one of the first of sufi’s classics, al-Sarrāj al-Tūsī (d. 378H/988CE) says, “Those, who believe in (*qāil*) soul’s migration from a body to another, are deviant and obviously in loss”. According to al-Sarrāj, just as how obedience and sin cannot become apparent from a body without soul or from a soul without body, punishment and reward cannot be given to only soul or body without the existence of the other. al-Sarrāj also rejects an idea of *tanāsukh* that means “Falling to earth with a separation from the Eternal one by becoming embodied, and then returning to the Eternal one through evolving by rebirths”; he states that the “Eternal does not separate from the eternal, and the creature cannot be united with the eternal.”⁷⁸ In his work *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, which is one of the important sources of Sufism before mystical sects, Hujvīrī (d. 470H/1077CE) also splits the sūfi sects into 12, and regards Hallājiyyah and Hulmāniyyah from these 12 sects as heretic and superstitious because they believe in incarnation and *tanāsukh*.

According to Hujvīrī, just as it is impossible for a human to have two lives, it is impossible for a soul to have two bodies.⁷⁹ In the same way, Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (465H/1072CE) also states that soul and body can’t exist apart from each other, and supports the view that a human being is an inseparable whole. al-Qushayrī also says that souls are created (*makhluq*) and a person will make a big mistake by believing in their eternity.⁸⁰ On the other hand, According to Imām Rabbanī (d. 1034H/1625CE), who was a sūfi that had lived in Indian region where belief in reincarnation is widespread, the belief of *tanāsukh*, which he described as wandering of *nafs* in bodies for reaching perfection, is contrary to the essential’s of religion, which are based on sound narrations, and branded believers in it as infidels. According to Imām Rabbanī, “If every *nafs*

⁷⁴ al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 1: 67,77,82,114.

⁷⁵ al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 13, 232.

⁷⁶ Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, 166.

⁷⁷ Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 299, 300.

⁷⁸ Abū Nasr Sarraāj, *al-Luma’*, trans. H. Kâmil Yılmaz (Istanbul: Altınoluk Publications1996), 226.

⁷⁹ Abū 'l-Ḥasan Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergah Publications1996), 309-312.

⁸⁰ Abdulkarim Qushairī, *al-Risala*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergah Publications, 1999), 182.

will wander in bodies until they reach perfection, who will go to hell and thus how will it perform its action?”⁸¹ Important sūfis, such as ‘Azīzuddīn Nasafī (d. 700H/1300CE), Niyāzī-i Miṣrī (d. 1105H/1694CE) and Abū ‘Alī at-Tahānawī (d. 1158H/1745CE), likewise rejected *tanāsukh* too.⁸²

The belief of *tanāsukh* was not favored by the Islamic Philosophers as well. For example, according to al-Fārābī (d. 339H/950CE), ‘*nafs*’ (soul) is not eternal, but it is created with body. Due to the principle of justice, after the body dies, soul either becomes happy or suffers from torture because it deserves either one of them. From this perspective, the idea that the soul migrates from one body to another is not possible.⁸³ As for Avicenna (d. 428H/1037CE), existence of soul before body is out of question. When the body starts to take a form and gets ready to receive the *nafs*, a self-contained *nafs* is given to it by “active intellect” and the body is given to the disposal of a single *nafs* that is conscious. After the death of the body, the soul continues to exist, but it is impossible for it to migrate into other bodies. If *tanāsukh* is accepted, there must be two souls in the same body -one of which comes from outside and the other one already existing in it; and this is impossible because a living being cannot have two different consciousness’s.⁸⁴ Philosophers, such as Nāṣīruddīn at-Tūsī (d. 672H/1273CE) and as-Suhrawardī (d. 632H/1234CE), and scholars, such as al-Ghazālī and Fakhruddīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606H/1210CE), also followed Avicenna’s approach in their denial of *tanāsukh*, and favored an approach that is based on the uniqueness of the soul’s for each individual.⁸⁵

As is seen, the belief of transmigration of soul is not included in classic Islamic thought except for some extremist marginal groups. Islamic scholars, particularly *mutakallimūn*, criticized this belief and accused its members with disbelief. However, while the criticisms that came from the prominent figures of Islamic schools of thought against the belief of *tanāsukh* are historically meaningful and valuable, it is obvious that the debates in this field have gained an additional aspect with the new claims of spiritualist trends. So we aim to contribute to the solution of an important problem of belief that today’s Muslims face by evaluating the most used claims by the spiritualist trends (especially in Turkey) in the matter of supporting reincarnation. Essentially, this situation will help us to show more clearly that reincarnation is not just a belief in the afterlife. Rather, it is a comprehensive belief system, in the sense that its acceptance will necessitate an alternative understanding of God, the universe, and human beings, which is contrary to orthodox Islam.

3. Evaluation of the Arguments by Some Spiritualist Trends for Reincarnation

While the belief in God and the afterlife in divine religions were criticized thoroughly by Western philosophers such as David Hume (1711-1776), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and

⁸¹ Imām Rabbānī, *Maktūbāt* (371. letter), trans. Abdülkadir Akçicek (Istanbul: Çile Publications, 1978), 2: 1137.

⁸² Mustafa Aşkar, “Reenkarnasyon (Tenâsih) Meselesi ve Mutasavvıfların Bu Konuya Bakışlarının Değerlendirilmesi= Evaluation of The Issue of Reincarnation and Outlooks of Mutasawwifūn on It”, 89.

⁸³ Abū Naşr Fārābī, “‘Uyūn al-Masāil”, *İslâm Filozoflarından Felsefe Metinleri= Philosophical Texts from Islamic Philosophers*, trans. Mahmut Kaya (Istanbul: Klasik Publications, 2003), 125.

⁸⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, edited by Majid Fakhry (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda 1982), 227.

⁸⁵ Aḥmad Zakī Tuffāḥah, *al-Nafs al-bashariyah wa-naẓariyat al-tanāsukh* (Lebanon: 1987), 96; İrfān Abdulḥamīd, *Dirāsāt fī al-Firāq wa al-Aqāid al-Islāmiyya*, 72; al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 299.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), doctrines like the transmigration of soul and Karma were not criticized.⁸⁶ While this absence is justified by saying that such beliefs are not taken seriously in the West, the weakening of belief in theism, which began with deism in Europe, and which facilitated secularization and culminated with materialism, caused the rebirth of Gnosticism. This situation gave rise to a whole host of spiritualist movements, cults, and trends –such as Spiritism, Neo-Spiritualism, Anthroposophy, Theosophy, New Age and Scientology.⁸⁷ These movements, which adopt reincarnation and simply provide an alternative system for religions with the metaphysics and epistemology they produce,⁸⁸ have organized globally with the influence of globalization. Their influence in the west is especially pervasive; studies show that one out of every five people, on average, in North America and West Europe believes in reincarnation.⁸⁹

In Turkey, these trends are represented by mostly ‘Neo-spiritualist’ based constitutions, such as Metaphysic Investigations and Scientific Research Society (Metapsişik Tetkikler ve İlmi Araştırmalar Derneği) and Soul and Matter Publications (Ruh ve Madde Publications).⁹⁰ Such groups mostly adopt a reincarnationist view of the ‘immortality of soul’ and an ‘absolutist’ view of the divine on which God does not stand in a relation of creation with the universe. However, with regards to the former, they have a more optimistic world-view compared to traditional *tanāsukh* belief, basing their own account on ‘a spiritual evolution’ that always progresses in this context.⁹¹ For members of these groups, reincarnation is not a belief but it is a scientific fact. It has a super-religious and super-national universal status. And they generally promote it with to a wider audience with names and signs that symbolize peace and fraternity, as well as with distorted quotations from respected people, including statements from holy texts that belong to divine religions, in particular the *Qur’ān*.⁹² This sort of propaganda or missionary activity has been so effective that some theologians have not definitively rejected reincarnation⁹³ and some even claimed that “Reincarnation is also

⁸⁶ Jan Bremmer, “Life After Death”, *Gale Encyclopedia Science Religion* (New York: Thomson Gale, 2003), 517-522.

⁸⁷ Mehmet Bulğen, “Kelām İlminin Kozmolojik Boyutları ve Günümüz Kozmolojisi= Cosmological Dimensions of Science of Kalam and Today’s Cosmology”, *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi=Journal of Marmara University Theology Faculty* 39 (2010/2), 67; Albrecht, *Reincarnation: A Christian Critique of a New Age Doctrine*, 8-9.

⁸⁸ İlyas Çelebi, “Kur’ān ve Sünnetin Okültizme Bakışı= Occultism in the Eye of the Qur’ān and Sunnah”, *Kur’ān ve Tefsir Araştırmaları-V* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2003), 153.

⁸⁹ Ian Stevenson, *Children Who Remember Previous Lives* (USA: McFarland, 2001), 30.

⁹⁰ See Baloğlu, *İslâm’a Göre Tekrar Doğuş=Rebirth According to Islam*, 162; Kürşat Demirci, “Dünya Dinlerinde Tanāsukh İnancı= Belief of Reincarnation in World Religions”, *İzlenim* 9 (Eylül 1993), 6.

⁹¹ Bedri Ruhseiman, *Ruh ve Kāināt= Soul and Universe* (İstanbul: Gayret Kitabevi 1946), 3: 1026-1028.

⁹² İ. Lütüfî Kuday – A. Sevil Akay, *Spiritualizm Ruh Ansiklopedisi= Encyclopaedia of Spiritualism and Soul* (İstanbul: Gayret Kitabevi, 1950), 236-239.

⁹³ For example, Süleyman Ateş, the former president of Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, says about reincarnation: "As a scientist, we do not reject this belief precisely and do not accept it. There are verses in the Qur'an that may be proofs of this belief, besides the ones that are not meant to be. We certainly do not refuse it, because if one day reincarnation is proved with certain proof that it is real then there is no point in imposing "No, there is no such thing in the Qur'an". See Süleyman Ateş, “Reenkarnasyon (Yeniden Bedenlenme)”, *Kur’ān Mesajı* 2/13-14-15 (1999), 108.

mentioned in the *Qur’ān*”⁹⁴. Let us, then, turn to evaluating the arguments that spiritualist trends use most frequently to support their reincarnationist views.

3.1. Is Reincarnation a Scientific Fact?

The most common argument that the neo-spiritualist trends use to support the transmigration belief in Turkey is that reincarnation is a scientific fact and a universal law. They cite ‘past-life recall’, which appears in children spontaneously and in adults under hypnosis, as evidence for their claims. In this context, it is said that a person, an object, a place and events in relation to past-life are recognized and remembered in detail. However, reincarnation is not the only way to explain events like these. There are also alternative psychological and psychosocial explanations of these events. For example, in the University of Iceland, Erlendur Haraldson, one of the professors from the Department of Psychology, confirmed that factors such as social isolation, taking attention, being under influence, multiple personality tendencies, a dream of a life full of wealth, parental problems and memory disorders, may lead to past-life recalls in a clinical study.⁹⁵

Besides, research has revealed that claims like these are systematically seen in cultures and communities in which the belief of reincarnation is common.⁹⁶ This situation suggests the possibility of cultural conditioning because when we look at the content of these claims, we see that while most of the people make past-life claim as important characters, they are ordinary people now.⁹⁷ Therefore, it is quite likely that the people, who listen to stories like these in their culture and community and observe peoples’ intense interest in them, come to eventually believe that they could have also experienced such things, and when the charm of the personality that they want to be is added to this, the person conditions himself psychologically with the help of his imagination.

Another explanatory factor is the subject of hypnosis. The subject, who has the tendency for obeying the suggestions of a hypnotizer, engages in fantasy recalls that he might later come to actually believe he really experienced. However, rather than being a reminder, these recalls are psychosocial constructions, in which the thought “to pretend to be someone else” is at play. Particularly the person’s believing in reincarnation, wishes and desires, tendency for hypnosis, guidance of the hypnotizer, life experience, the level of education, the popular novels and stories that are read and the TV shows, movies and documentaries that are watched, all affect this process of construction.⁹⁸ In fact, the change in historical information with later findings revealed the incorrectness of very detailed information that is given under hypnosis. For example, the subjects would always describe themselves wearing a horned helmet consistent with the official historical depictions in their past-life memories about the Vikings. However, the subsequent historical findings

⁹⁴ Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, *Kur’ān’daki İslām= Islam in the Qur’ān* (Istanbul: Yeni Boyut, 1996), 257-258; Ateş, “Reenkarnasyon (Yeniden Bedenlenme)”, 108.

⁹⁵ Erlendur Haraldsson, “Psychological Comparison Between Ordinary Children and Those who Claim Previous-life memories”, *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 11 (1997), 323-335.

⁹⁶ Ian Stevenson, *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect* (USA: Greenwood, 1997), 1 ff.

⁹⁷ Gérard Encausse Papis, *Reenkarnasyon*, trans. Halûk Özden (Istanbul: RMY, 1999), 117.

⁹⁸ Nicholas P. Spanos, “Multiple Identities and False Memories: A Sociocognitive Perspective”, *American Psychological Association* (Washington: 2001), 131.

revealed that Viking sailors had not worn horned helmets, but they had worn a tight cap in the shape of funnel.⁹⁹

Moreover, clinical studies showed that hypnosis may result in pseudo-memory. Thus, the person, who is under the hypnosis, accepts the false information along with the hypnotizer’s orientations, and then can pass on this information as it is real.¹⁰⁰ In addition, due to concern of performing the suggestions and satisfying the hypnotizer, the person can fill the gaps that he cannot remember with imagination.¹⁰¹

Ian Stevenson, who researched over 2500 past-life claims more than over 40 years says that even if all these cases were brought together, it would not mean that reincarnation is proven scientifically, and he says that reincarnation is fundamentally a belief.¹⁰² Stevenson also states that the children, who tell memories like these, experience spiritual crises and dissociative identity disorder, refuse their parents and experience family tragedies where ex-husbands, wives and children fight with each other, things get messy and very problematic.¹⁰³ For this reason, identity changes, their causes in psychology and the processes of diagnosis and treatment are shown as the symptoms of ‘dissociative disorder’ disease. In a study, it was shown that a significant percentage of the patients that have dissociative disorder (22.9 %) experience reincarnation.¹⁰⁴

In modern psychiatry, while reincarnation is regarded as a disorder to be treated, spiritualist trends represent reincarnation as a universal and scientific fact. Furthermore, the claims of incidents such as “birthmarks”, “deja vu”, “child prodigy”, “telepathy” and “near death experiences” prove reincarnation scientifically do not reflect the reality. Relevant fields of studies also make similar explanations for all these incidents.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the spiritualist trends, parapsychology, which studies unusual incidents like reincarnation, does not seek to accept that there is a different world of phenomena beyond physical reality by simplifying it and explain this zone with an epistemology that is an alternative to normative scientific practice. On the contrary, parapsychology intends to investigate the unusual phenomena with the best current scientific tools and thus provide further scientific justification of it, if any.¹⁰⁶ When we look at the historical process, we see that the study field of parapsychology gets narrower as incidents, which were regarded as

⁹⁹ Ian Wilson, *Reincarnation? The Claims Investigated* (London: Penguin, 1982), 8.

¹⁰⁰ Kevin M. McConkey, “Hypnosis and Pseudomemory”, *Truth in Memory*, edited by Steven J. Lynn - Kevin M. McConkey (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 227.

¹⁰¹ J. Dywan – K. Bowers, “The Use of Hypnosis to Enhance Recall, *Science* 222-4620 (Oct 14 1983):184-5.

¹⁰² Ian Stevenson, “Interview”, *Omni Magazine* 10/4 (1998): 76

¹⁰³ Ian Stevenson, “Interview”, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Hamdi Tutkun, “Reenkarnasyon”, *Aksiyon Dergisi* (Şubat 1997): 155.

¹⁰⁵ It has been found that coordination disturbances between eyes during vision (one of the eyes transmits signals to the brain later than the other) may lead to the strange feeling that you have already experienced what is happening now (deja vu). It has been determined that some drugs used during pregnancy cause similar birthmarks. The appearance of similar birthmarks among close relatives also suggests genetic effects. See Paul Edwards, *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), 48 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Tahir Özakkaş, “Parapsikoloji ve Metafiziği Anlamak=Understanding Parapsychology and Metaphysics”, *Kur’ân ve Tefsir Araştırmaları-IV* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2004), 338-329.

‘paranormal’ once, enter the borders of empirical explanation.¹⁰⁷ However, parapsychology could not make the phenomenon ‘posthumous’ a scientific matter despite all efforts.¹⁰⁸ The unrepeatable characters of paranormal phenomena that happen quite rarely make it harder to accurately determine their value in reality. That being the case, the arguments about posthumous can only be a hypothesis for now.¹⁰⁹

Contrary to the claims that reincarnation has become scientific and a universal fact, there is a contradiction between this belief and the basic paradigms of today’s science. For example, according to the Bing Bang theory, which has become standard in modern cosmology, everything in the physical universe, including energy, time-space and valid laws, started to exist 13.7 billion years ago.¹¹⁰ After that, there have been periods that continued for billions of years without life in the universe. The beginning of life, particularly human’s appearance in history, is a quite new phenomenon. Therefore, unlike the neo-spiritualist trends, according to which “souls are in an eternal relation with the matter”, modern cosmology does not attribute qualities like eternity, everlastingness and infinity to the universe. It depicts a universe coherent with divine religions that is finite and limited.

On the other hand, the continuity of human consciousness and preservation of personal identity are accepted as a basic postulate in the perspective of both classic and modern philosophical and psychological approaches. Accordingly, for the claims of reincarnation or immortality to be valid, human needs to remember his former life, which is asserted as being the consequence of his current life, with his self-consciousness. Impersonal immortality, in which a person is not conscious of his former self, is the same as mortality,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ It would be worth mentioning the activities of James Randi, a renowned illusionist and parapsychologist, who worked with the foundation he founded in Florida in 1996 to develop scientific explanations of any unusual activity observed on Earth. In a statement he made through his James Randi Educational Foundation, Randi promised "a million dollars" to those who could prove the opposite, arguing that there was no paranormal activity that could lead to break natural laws on earth. Randi has argued that all events called "paranormal" have an appropriate explanation in science and logic. Randi stresses that he, as a senior illusionist, has been performing the most complex stage shows for fifty years with the contributions of science such as engineering, chemistry, optics or physics. In the 1970s, Geller, who turned into a world-wide phenomenon with the mind-bending spoon number, was accused by Randi of being a fraud. Randi succeeded in repeating Geller's spoon bending number exactly in the face of the cameras, proving that this was done entirely by hand rather than by the power of the mind, and he had a great blow to Geller. Randi suggested that magicians were making demonstrations that stagnated people's minds, but they never create miracles. The JREF Foundation's call for a \$ 1 million prize covering all the para normal events from the necromancy to contact with the genie is valid and has not earned the right to receive this award until now. see <http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/1m-challenge.html> (access: 10.01.2011).

¹⁰⁸ Aydın, *Din Felsefesi=Philosophy of Religion*, 249.

¹⁰⁹ Koç, *Ölümsüzlük Düşüncesi= The Notion of Immortality*, 184.

¹¹⁰ see Joseph Silk, *On The Shores of the Unknown: A Short History of The Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1 ff.; Leon Lederman, *The God Particle* (Canada: Delta Book, 1993), 1; James E. Lidsey, *The Bigger Bang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55; Steven L. Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View Of The Origin Of The Universe* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 11 ff.

¹¹¹ Koç, *Ölümsüzlük Düşüncesi = The Notion of Immortality*, 117.

because human becomes a human being and gains identity and individualism with his memories, experiences, goals, wishes and consciousness. From this point of view, the historical life experience that he lived is one of his integral parts without which he wouldn't truly count as himself. Here's an analogy: it's as if a newborn is like an empty board, and every human paints his own authentic self on this board from his birth and continues this process for his entire life. Death marks the completion of this process. What reincarnation claims is that people make pictures always on the same board by gathering many historical identities living in one soul. Accordingly, the previous picture drawn on the board is erased, and a new picture is drawn from scratch after every rebirth. For example, according to reincarnation there will be no more a historical Napoléon portrait because there is someone else's picture on that board (soul). The existing picture will be erased too, and it will be replaced with someone else's picture. However, divine religions promise to save every historical portrait as how they are drawn. Reincarnationists, on the other hand, almost do a historical identity slaughter by erasing an authentic portrait-person that consists of memories, experiences, goals, sins and good deeds.

The thought of reincarnation again contradicts with basic paradigms of today's psychology too because modern psychology regards every living person as an independent individual, and invites human to be at peace with himself in this context. Accordingly, someone should reveal himself and confirm his position in the universe instead of pretending to be someone else. However, the claim of reincarnation means a person's renouncing being himself and sharing his soul and individualism with someone else, and this situation means this person's loss of self-respect. It is not possible for today's science of psychology to accept such an approach.

Another subject is the inheritance by human beings of various features from members in their family tree. For today's genetic science says that human has spiritual-physical features that are inherited from genes. For example, the comparison of twins that share the same genes and brothers that are not twins with different genes reveals that many forms of behavior are seriously affected by genetic inheritance.¹¹² However, according to the belief of reincarnation, it is unclear that how a soul that migrates into another body after death chooses a body that is compatible with its character and how to explain the inheritance in this case.¹¹³

On the other hand, the studies on human nature revealed that damages and chemical instabilities in specific parts of brain affect specific mental/spiritual abilities dramatically.¹¹⁴ Therefore, science makes the soul-body dualism, which is the basic postulate of reincarnationists, controversial by revealing the strong dependence of mental and spiritual lives on biological processes. Modern science tends to consider human as a whole with his soul and body rather than separating him into two as soul and body.

Again according to the belief of reincarnation, the eternal souls keep reincarnating until they reach the perfection or the level of absolute soul. The soul that reaches the perfection exists the system by not

¹¹² Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (USA: Harpercollins, 2000), viii.

¹¹³ Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, “İslâmî Açıdan Tanāsukh Hakkında Bir Değerlendirme = An Evaluation about Tanāsukh in Islamic Perspective”, *İslâm'da İnanç İbadet ve Günlük Yaşayış Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İFAV, 1997), IV: 330.

¹¹⁴ Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, viii.

having a need for *tanāsukh* anymore. On the other hand, because the souls are regarded as eternal and constant, an entry of a new soul to the system will not be possible. Accordingly, if the process of rebirth is an everlasting process, the souls should have finished their improvements until now and thus should have ended their rebirth processes. This cannot be refuted by saying that there is infinite number of souls because an infinite number of soul requires an infinite amount of matter. However, as we have mentioned before, Modern Cosmology does not equate the qualities, such as eternity, everlastingness and infinity, with the universe.

Consequently, the argument that reincarnation is a scientifically proven universal fact is completely a “spiritualist mistake”; in fact, this belief contradicts with today’s science’s basic paradigms about the universe and human beings.

3.2. Do Reincarnation and Law of Karma Solve the Problem of Evil?

Another argument that modern spiritualist trends make to justify reincarnation is that the moral law (karma), which reincarnation depends on, explains the differentiations in society, and thus it solves the problem of evil (theodicy). For this reason, if someone is wailing in the grip of an illness in misery while someone else lives a happy life in prosperity, the reason of such inequality should be searched in the past lives of the people aforementioned. However, this claim of spiritualist trends is also contradictory because the doctrine of karma cannot explain how the differentiations appeared in the first place in the society or their origins. As is claimed, if every being’s fate is destined according their previous existence, then how and according to what is the first form of being determined? Also, were the beings, which are in different status and forms now, in an equal state at the beginning? If it is assumed that they were not equal at the beginning, then an inequality for which they are not responsible, and the consequences of this, must be accepted in advance. But if they were equal at the beginning, it becomes necessary to say that their inequality started at one in their previous lives, which raises the question ‘how is it disrupted?’ Therefore, it is impossible to answer questions like these with an understanding that accepts the universe and the karma, which directs the universe’s mechanism, as eternal.¹¹⁵

While the law of karma cannot explain how the differentiations between beings started, it will also pose other bigger ethical problems. For example, when B, who lives today, is regarded as manifestation of A, who lived in the past, punishing B because of A’s mistake will be a big cruelty for B simply because B is not identical to A. Also, if person B suffers agony and does not know because of which sin he committed in his past he suffers, this will not be beneficial to individual’s spiritual progress, and this situation will lead to a worse “karma” for the person C in the future. Thus, evil in the universe will constantly advance. On the other hand, it is also controversial issue that karmic law, which functions with an obligatory and cruel cause-effect relation, makes humane emotions, such as regret, forgiveness, mercy, pity and compassion, meaningless.

¹¹⁵ René Guénon, *The Spiritist Fallacy* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004), 199-200; Ali İhsan Yitik, *Hint Kökenli Dinlerde Karma İnancının Tenasüh İnancıyla İlişkisi= Relationship between the Belief of Karma in Indian-rooted Religions and the Belief of Reincarnation* (Istanbul: RMY, 1996), 201.

3.3. Does The Qur’ān Mention Reincarnation?

Another claim of the spiritualist trends in Turkey is that divine religions and holy books, particularly the *Qur’ān*, confirm reincarnation. According to them, the religion of Islam had presented reincarnation along with many other doctrines 14 centuries ago. But, they further claim, this doctrine was distorted or denied by some commentators due to ignorance and prejudice.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, reincarnationists make exegesis of all verses about resurrection (*ba’s*) in the *Qur’ān* as “resurrection in the world after death”.¹¹⁷ However, when they do this, they do not feel an obligation for being dependent on the methods of understanding, such as the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the verse before and after a verse (*siyāq* and *sibāq*), other verses related to topic and the integrity of the *Qur’ān*.

For example, reincarnationists say that the statement “day of resurrection (*ba’s*)”¹¹⁸ in the *Qur’ān* means the resurrection in this world. However, the words in the *Qur’ān* are not simply isolated and separate from each other. Combined with each other by various methods, they form an integral whole.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, the word “*ba’s*” is a word that is used in the context of afterlife in the *Qur’ān*, and all words in this system are connected with each other by the word “day (*yawm*)”: “the day of resurrection”,¹²⁰ “doomsday”,¹²¹ “a day that will certainly come”,¹²² “the day of returning to Allah”,¹²³ “the day of calling”,¹²⁴ “the day of emergence [from the graves]”,¹²⁵ “the day of gathering”,¹²⁶ “the day of convergence”,¹²⁷ “the day of reckoning”¹²⁸ “the

¹¹⁶ Sinan Onbulak, *Ruhi Olaylar ve Ölümünden Sonrası= Psychic Phenomena and After Death* (Istanbul: Dilek Yayınevi 1975), 321.

¹¹⁷ Kuday – Akay, *Spiritualizm Ruh Ansiklopedisi = Encyclopaedia of Spiritualism and Soul*, 328; Onbulak, *Ruhi Olaylar ve Ölümünden Sonrası=Psychic Phenomena and After Death*, 321; Sadi Çaycı, *Ruhçuluğa Göre Kur’ān Öğretisi= The Qur’ānic Doctrine to the Spiritualism* (Istanbul: RMY, 1995), 94-101; Cem Çobanlı, *Reenkarnasyon* (Istanbul: Dharma Publications, 2001), 29.

¹¹⁸ Hıjr 15/36; Maryam 19/15, 33; al-Rūm 30/56.

¹¹⁹ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur’ān* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 27.

¹²⁰ al-Qaf 50/56.

¹²¹ al-Qiyāmah 75/1.

¹²² Hūd 11/103.

¹²³ al-Baqara 2/281; al-Nūr 24/64.

¹²⁴ al-Mu’min 40/32.

¹²⁵ al-Qāf 50/42.

¹²⁶ al-Şūrā 42/7; Tagābun 64/9; Hūd 11/103; al-Māida 5/109.

¹²⁷ al-Mu’min 40/15; al-Tawbah 9/77.

¹²⁸ Sād 38/49-57.

day of regret”,¹²⁹ “the day of promise” (wa’d and waīd),¹³⁰ “the day of separation”,¹³¹ “the day of religion”,¹³² “the day of eternity”¹³³ can be given as examples for these.

That being the case, even if the word “resurrection/ba’s”, which is related to the context of afterlife via the word “day”, exists alone, it gains a depth of meaning that is strong enough to point out all other word’s content meaning as it is a part of the system it belongs. Therefore, it is impossible to consider the statement “resurrection day” in the afterlife belief independent of the meanings of words used in conjunction with the word “day” such as “doomsday”, “resurrection”, “reckoning” and “regret”.

Moreover, the ascribed meanings of the words that are mentioned in the *Qur’ān* must be consistent with the *Qur’ān*’s integrity too, not just with the system they belong. For example, reincarnationists claim that the statement “*al-Ba’s ba’da al-mawt*” (resurrection after death), which is mentioned in *Āmantu* (Pillars of Islam), means “being present to this world after death”.¹³⁴ However, it will not take much time to realize that an interpretation like this contradicts with other notions of the *Qur’ān* because if we understand *ba’s*, that is to say resurrection, as “rebirth in this world”, then in which way should we understand “the resurrection” in Demon’s statement “**My Lord! Then grant me delay until the day they are resurrected**”¹³⁵? Will the Satan start chasing humans at their first resurrections and then stop following them at their subsequent resurrections? On the other hand, when we understand “*al-Ba’s ba’da al-mawt*” as “resurrection in afterlife after death”, better sense is made of the various verses which mention the word and their relation to each other..

In addition to this, spiritualists have claimed that the statement “**you killed two times, and you resurrected two times**” in the 11th verse of the chapter of Mu’min refers to reincarnation. However, this claim of reincarnationists is also baseless because cognate and implicit statements in the *Qur’ān* should be understood in the explanatory integrity of the *Qur’ān* and hadith. The close case that is formed in a verse of the *Qur’ān* because of eloquence can be explained in another verse or hadiths in details. In the same way, Glossators also explain the statement “two times killing and two times resurrecting” with some other verses in the *Qur’ān* (al-Baqara 2/28, Maryam 19/9 and al-Jāsiya 45/24-26). Accordingly, “first death” is people’s conditions of not having a life before resurrecting in the world; “second death” is their dying in this world. In the same way, the meaning of resurrection for two times is the resurrection in this world and the resurrection that will happen in afterlife.¹³⁶ Some glossators like Fakhraddīn ar-Rāḍī, and Elmalili Hamdi Yazir (1878-

¹²⁹ Maryam 19/39.

¹³⁰ al-Qāf 50/20; Saba’ 34/30; al-Burūj 85/2.

¹³¹ Sāffāt 37/21; ad-Duhān 44/40; al-Mursalat 77/13,14,38; al-Naba 78/17.

¹³² al-Fātiha 1/4.

¹³³ al-Kahf 50/34.

¹³⁴ Kuday – Akay, *Spiritualizm Ruh Ansiklopedisi=Encyclopaedia of Spiritualism and Soul*, 236-239; Onbulak, *Ruhi Olaylar ve Ölümünden Sonrası=Psychic Phenomena and After Death*, 321.

¹³⁵ al-Hijr 15/36.

¹³⁶ Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī* (Riyadh: 2003), 1: 443-450, 20: 290-292; Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* (Riyadh: Maktaba al-Ubaykan 1998), 3: 418.

1942), who seems to be influenced by ar-Rāḍī, interpreted “to be killed two times” as humans dying in the world and dying after being resurrected in their graves after being questioned in the grave by the angels. And “to be resurrected two times” they interpret as the resurrection of humans in the grave and their resurrections in afterlife after doomsday.¹³⁷ The statement “Is there a way out?” that is mentioned in the verses (az-Zumar 39/58-59; al-Mu’minûn 23/99-100, 107-108; al-Munāfiqûn 63/10-11) only refers to peoples who wish to be resurrected; what they mean is that even though people will request Allah to ‘return to the world’ and be given ‘one more chance’, they will be refused strictly. For it is stated that the dead person cannot return to this world.

The *Qur’ân* explains the reason of not being returned to world with the following verse **“If they were turned, of course they would have turned back to what was forbidden for them again”**¹³⁸ because this return will necessitate not remembering the former life due to another Qur’ānic principle i.e., “the belief of unseen (*ghayb*)”. A return that will happen in this way, on the other hand, will lead to “repetition (*takarrur*)”. To explain with a simple example, a child, whose hand gets burned when he touches a hot stove, will not touch it again. If we assume that this child forgot the experience he had, the child will keep touching the heating stove. However, if we say, “one can remember his/her former life”, then the principle of “the belief of unseen” will be disrupted because Allah created humans to test them.¹³⁹ The way of becoming successful in this exam is: faith and good deeds “even though they do not see” as is mentioned in many verses.¹⁴⁰ Thus, when human sees beings that actually should not be seen by him, then his test is over.¹⁴¹

In this case, it will not be wrong at all to put forward an idea like this:

- A) If returning to world after death will be mentioned, it is obligatory to completely forget the former life due to “the belief of unseen”.
- B) As human beings forget the experiences that they had in their former lives, they make the same mistakes that they did in their former lives.
- C) Conclusion: It is unnecessary to return to the world after death because this leads to repetition.

Reincarnation also contradicts with the “recall” and “regret” notions of the *Qur’ân*. Because, according to reincarnation, a human who is suffering in his present life, s/he is expected to not aware which deeds in his former life cause this due to “karma”. However, the *Qur’ân* states that humans will absolutely remember the reasons of the punishment that they will suffer when they are resurrected, and they will feel a deep regret for the things they have done.¹⁴²

On the other hand, the *Qur’ân* rejects the belief that what exists today is a different manifestation of the past and also the belief in “karmic bonds”, which claims that the distresses and hardships that are suffered now are because of bad deeds in past lives. In many verses of the *Qur’ân*, people who lived in the past,

¹³⁷ Fakhraddīn Rāḍī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dāru’l-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1990), 27: 36; Elmalılı M. Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur’ân Dili* (Istanbul: Feza Gazetecilik, nd.), 6: 515.

¹³⁸ al-An’am 6/28.

¹³⁹ Hûd 11/7; al-Mulk 67/2.

¹⁴⁰ al-Anbiyā 21/49; Fâtır 35/18; al-Mulk 67/12.

¹⁴¹ al-An’am 6/8.

¹⁴² al-Infītār 82/4,5; al-Mujadala 7/58; Nāzi’āt 79/35; Yûnus 10/54; Maryam 19/39, al-Zumar 54/58; Shu’arā 26/102.

live in the present and will live in the future, separated from each other strictly in terms of personal and lawful responsibilities, and it is revealed that mankind will be gathered as a whole in the presence of Allah in order to be judged.¹⁴³

Reincarnation is explaining that only one life is not enough for the rise of the spirit and for human to be tested and living a long life is advantageous for human.¹⁴⁴ However, a way of thought like this is not consistent with the *Qurʾān* because the *Qurʾān* states that living a long life will increase the agony instead of saving the human from that pain.¹⁴⁵

There is no statement that implies *tanāsukh* in the literature of hadith.¹⁴⁶ The prophet. Mohammad revealed that the book of deeds will be closed when a person dies.¹⁴⁷ In another report, it is stated that Allah resolved that a dead man cannot return to the world.¹⁴⁸

Finally, on the basis of the works of spiritualist trends that adopted the reincarnation belief in Turkey, we will try to support our argument that reincarnation does not simply involve believing in returning to the world, but it entails an inaccurate i.e., non-*Qurʾānic* view of God, the world, and the place of human beings in relation to God and the world. And hence accepting this belief will harm basic essentials of Islam, particularly the belief in divine oneness.

According to neo-spiritualist thought, which adopted the understanding of an “Absolute” God, the “Absolute” is the thing that is not comparable with anything at all. Therefore, whereas it is impossible to associate God with any kind of action, it is also impossible to attribute qualities that exist by his essence, such as “omnipotence”, “omnipresence”, “goodness” and characteristic features, such as “creating” and “not creating” to Him.¹⁴⁹ For this reason, prophets, who were charged with the purpose of guidance for people, were sent by SMM (Spiritual Management Mechanism) to the world, not by God. In the same way, “the *Qurʾān* is not directly Allah’s expression” because it is not possible for the Absolute to address human, who is a finite being.¹⁵⁰ Also, the created beings, which continuously spread in the infinity to an extent that is beyond humans’ scope of imagination, is eternal and everlasting. Therefore, questions such as ‘How and when did Allah create the being?’ are meaningless. The universe’s being proportional causes it to be conducted and managed by “spirits/guardian beings” which are at different evolution levels, not by Allah. In this context, there is a constantly evolving hierarchy of spirits in the universe.¹⁵¹ In this hierarchy, advanced

¹⁴³ al-Baqara 2/134, 141; al-Wāqiah 56/47-50; Yāsīn 36/30-32; al-Baqara 2/286.

¹⁴⁴ Öztürk, *Kurʾân’daki İslâm=Islam in the Qurʾân*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ al-Baqara 2/94-96; Āl-i Imrân 3/178.

¹⁴⁶ İbn Hazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl*, 166.

¹⁴⁷ Muslim, “Wasiyyah”, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Māje, “Muqaddima”, 13; “Jihād”, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Bedri Ruhselman, *Ruh ve Kāinat= Soul and Universe*, III: 1024, 1025; Id, *Allah* (Istanbul: Gayret Kitabevi 1955), 7-14.

¹⁵⁰ Çaycı, *Ruhçuluğa Göre Kurʾân Öğretisi=The Qurʾānic Doctrine to the Spiritualism*, 45, 93.

¹⁵¹ Ruhselman, *Ruh ve Kāinat= Soul and Universe*, 3: 1025, 1030, 1031.

spirits that are at higher levels have a right to supervise and manage the undeveloped ones.¹⁵² Before its rebirth, a low level spirit informs its rebirth in the world to the “mentor/guide being” in order to increase its experience. When the mentor being receives the answer, that is the application of the plan is approved, individual’s destiny is formed by “karmic factor”. Fate has started there, and the things that it will do become nearly apparent at that point. After that, reincarnation occurs. While the spirit implements its plan on earth, it may receive help, inspiration, courage and even warning from its mentor (an upper level spirit) as a result of its prayers and wishes.¹⁵³

As is seen, there is a “polytheism” problem that is a lot worse than the *tanāsukh* problem. An understating which keeps Allah apart from the universe by accepting him as “absolute”, has found the solution for immortality in spirit; on the other hand, it has filled the ensuing divine emptiness with quasi- divine powers. Such an approach, firstly, will create an opportunity for occultism, which contains many elements of polytheism that Islam has refused since the very beginning, such as paganism, cult of saints, magic, worshipping angels, jinn or souls.¹⁵⁴ Besides, it is not possible to harmonize a thought of a passive God, who loses His all names and attributions as being an absolute being, and who becomes something that cannot be beneficial for anything with the religion of Islam’s belief of Allah, who can create always at every moment, in every action and occurrence,¹⁵⁵ and who is the only one worshipped and asked for mercy,¹⁵⁶ who maintains the existence of earth and heavens just as He has created them in the first place.¹⁵⁷ For there is no difference between belief in a god, who is nothing more than names and attributes and who has no effect on the universe, and accepting that God does not exist.¹⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

A human being, which is the only being that is aware of death in the world of livings, has kept the hope of an eternal life alive ever since Hz. Adam.¹⁵⁹ The feeling of death and disappearance that is the basis of all fears has always been the first reason in human behavior, and humanity has sought out the ways of escaping from death with religious and philosophic solutions. No evidence that is an opposition to immortality could prevent a human being from hoping for ‘eternity’; thus, the religions that promise an immortal

¹⁵² Ergün Arıkdal, *Ansiklopedik Metapsişik Terimler Sözlüğü= Dictionary of Encyclopaedic Metaphysical Terms* (Istanbul: RMY, 1971), 95.

¹⁵³ E. Konyalıoğlu – C. Aksoylu, *Kader, Karma ve Tekrar Doğuş= Predestination, Karma and Resurrection* (Istanbul: RMY, 1987), 42-43.

¹⁵⁴ İlyas Çelebi, “Kur’ân ve Sünnetin Okültizme Bakışı= Occultism in the Eye of the Qur’ân and Sunnah”, 153.

¹⁵⁵ al-Baqara 2/255; al-Rahmân 55/29.

¹⁵⁶ al-Fātiha 1/5.

¹⁵⁷ Fâtır, 35/41.

¹⁵⁸ Halife Keskin, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Allah-Âlem İlişkisi= The Relationship between God and the Universe in Islamic Thought* (Istanbul: Beyan Publications, 1996), 175.

¹⁵⁹ al-A‘râf 7/20; Tâhâ 20/120.

life for humans have proved to be more advantageous over the thought systems that do not have such beliefs in every period of history.¹⁶⁰

Systematizing the belief that “life somehow goes on after death”, which is seen since the beginning of humanity, is one of the most important functions of religion. Religions have not only legitimated the emotion of eternity that human beings deeply harbored, but they have also made it a religious and ethical obligation. However, while religions ground their “immortality” and “salvation” doctrines, they have performed it within the scope of a system that is in parallel with God, universe and human concepts. In this concept, the thought and religion systems that adopt an “absolute” God understanding, whose relation to universe is impossible, have reached the immortality by the “absolute soul” theory with their own logic. According to them, soul is already eternal by its essence, and it does not need God for immortality. Divine religions, one of which is Islam, on the other hand, have favored a “God centered (theocentric)” approach about immortality. For them, just as how the “the beginning (*al-Mabda*)” was actualized by God, “the return (*al-Ma‘ād*)” will also be actualized by His wisdom, will and power. A similar difference is present in religions’ “salvation” theories as well. According to divine religions, without Allah’s help and mercy, and particularly “faith”, the actualization of salvation is impossible. According to religion and thought systems that adopted the Absolute God understanding, what brings salvation to human is his own efforts depending on the universal moral law (*karma*), not the faith in God.

It is obvious that the belief of “rebirth in this world” (*tanāsukh*/reincarnation), which is one of the solutions for human’s desire of eternity, in our opinion, is not consistent with Islam’s “resurrection in afterlife” (*akhirah*) doctrine. In fact, this matter has been discussed in detailed by books and articles were written in Turkey. However, we think that the most important thing to do for solving this modern belief problem is getting to the crux of the problem and emphasizing that these two beliefs are based on different conceptions of God, the universe and human concepts and relations. It is not possible for the religion of Islam’s one God, who is at the center of everything, to allow humanity’s salvation, which is an important essence of religion, in fact, the existence of it, to be explained in terms of concepts such as “immortal soul” and “universal law”, which puts God on the back burner. Basically, such an understanding will make God an unimportant figure in an individual’s life. If “soul” provides human’s immortality and a “moral law” (*karma*) that is independent of God provides his salvation, then what is the reason for believing in God? In fact, this situation explains why there is no omnipotence personal God concept cannot be formed in the religion and thought systems that have *tanāsukh* and reincarnation as core components. Or on the contrary, if the religion of Islam is a God centered religion and the belief in Allah matters that much in personal and social life, it is mostly because of accepting God as the absolute authority, as being the owner of the day of punishment and reward in terms of immortality and salvation. That is why the *Qur’ān* constantly mentions Allah and the belief in the afterlife in almost inseparably. These two doctrines stand or fall together; a damage that occurs in one of them will lead to damages to the other one.

The *Qur’ān* represents the oneness of God concept (*tawhīd*), and in this context, describes the universe as “Everything except God”. The *Qur’ān* draws attention to universe’s being subsequent and finite with its all elements in order to reveal that the universe is not God (If skies, stars, planets and the Earth, that is to

¹⁶⁰ Ernsts Von Aster, *İlk Çağ ve Orta Çağ Felsefe Tarihi= History of Antiquity and Mediaeval Philosophy* (Istanbul: İm Publications, 2000), 301.

say the universe as a whole, are formed subsequently and it is certain that one day their order will be disrupted and disappeared, then how can something that is created and mortal be God?). While the *Qur’ān* places the human being in a distinguished position in the universe, it also considers him as a part of the universe too; therefore, it accepts him in the same ontological status with the universe. This situation necessitates human’s being “subsequent” and “finite” as a whole as well. Therefore, it is impossible for the *Qur’ān* to accept a human nature with an absolute and immortal soul that has the same essence with the Creator. According to the *Qur’ān*, it is human “himself”, a soul-body unity, who is born, alive and dead, and will be resurrected in afterlife and questioned, and eventually, s/he will be placed in heaven or hell.

Although death is an observable fact, it is out of human’s scope of experience because it happens once for human, and the human, who experiences this phenomenon, cannot find the second opportunity to describe it. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether human’s immortality will be in afterlife by resurrection or by reincarnation by empirical means. On the contrary, it is possible to reveal the *Qur’ān*’s point of view about immortality and salvation for human being. This, however, can only be achieved by understanding the verses under the guidance of the right methods and techniques, because understanding and interpretation are not mechanisms that are free from personal attitude, expectation and prejudice. In this context, some people’s claim that “Reincarnation is cited in the *Qur’ān* too” becomes an obvious example of how a result that is not consistent with the *Qur’ān*’s integrity and Islam’s basic principles can be obtained when verses are discussed with ideological, partial, and fragmented approaches.

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